

Dual Language Learner Pilot Study

Findings and Policy Implications

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FIRST 5 CALIFORNIA
Dual Language Learner
PILOT STUDY



Background & Policy Context

- An estimated 60% of children under 5 in California are DLLs (CHIS, 2017)
- There are clear benefits to bilingualism (e.g., NASEM, 2017)
- Master Plan for Early Learning and Care elevates the importance of supporting DLLs
- California's \$5 million investment in the DLL-Professional Development Program in 2018

→ **Need:** *Better understanding of how educators and systems can best support DLLs and their families*

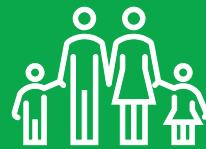


Focus Areas

Instructional
Strategies



Family
Engagement

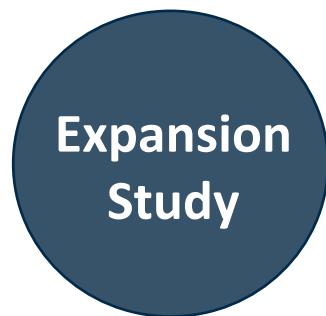
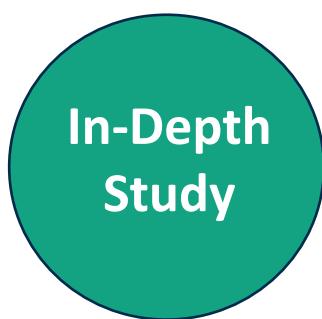


Professional
Development



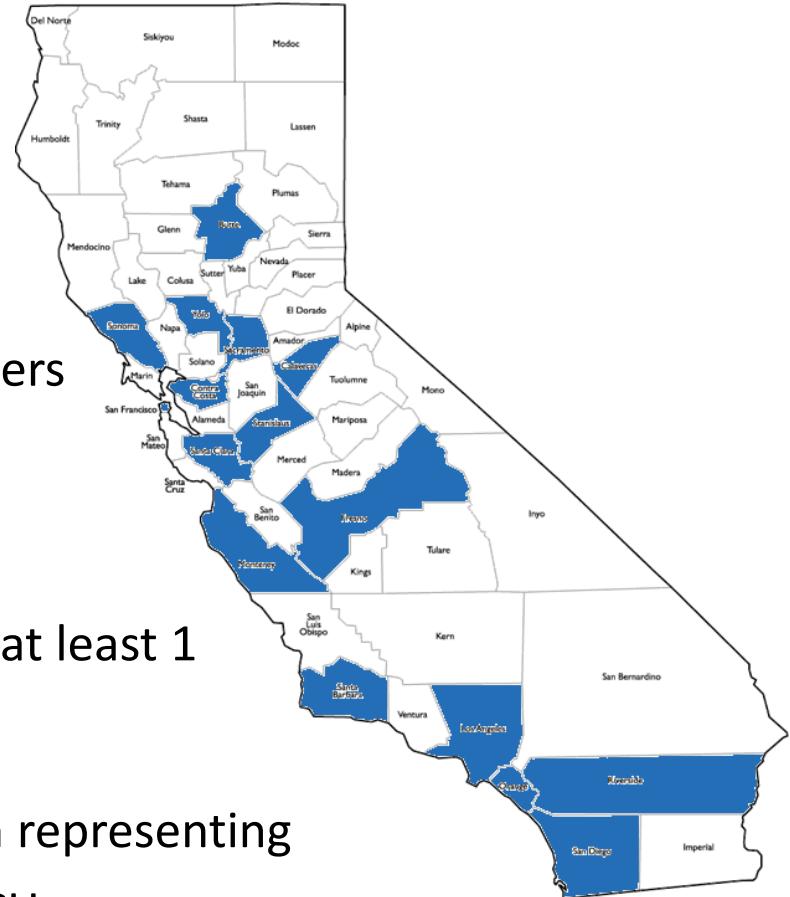
Goals of the Study

1. Characterize the **landscape of supports** for DLLs in California
2. Describe the **range and distribution of practices** used in early learning and care settings to support DLLs
3. Examine how those practices **relate to child and family outcomes**
4. Illustrate how promising practices can be **sustained and scaled**



Characterizing the DLL Landscape

- Interviews with county stakeholders in 16 counties
- State representative survey of nearly 800 early learning program administrators (centers and family child care homes [FCCHs])
- Revealed nearly universal presence of DLLs
 - 98% of centers and 70% of FCCHs served at least 1 DLL in 2019
 - 57% of DLL-serving *centers* serve children representing 3 or more languages, less common in FCCHs



In-Depth Study Sample and Design

- Included **over 2,000 DLLs** in **174 early learning and care programs** in 2019-20
- **All ages:** Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
- **Multiple languages:** Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese
- **Diverse settings:** Family child care and center-based care; no TK
- **Data sources**
 - Surveys of teachers and parents of DLLs
 - Direct assessments of preschool-aged children on language (English and home language), early literacy, math, executive function
 - Indirect assessments of social-emotional skills (all children) and language and general development (infants and toddlers)

COVID disruptions: No classroom observations or second round of child assessments

Evaluating the Expansion Phase

- 16 counties received funds to expand strategies to support DLLs through:
 - Building teacher knowledge of effective instructional practices
 - Strengthening family engagement strategies
 - Strengthen systemwide commitment to DLLs
- Gathering data on progress through:
 - County interviews
 - Provider focus groups
 - Parent interviews



Key Findings



Commitment to Bilingualism

- **Strong support for bilingualism**
 - Counties reported shifting community attitudes
 - Most program directors value bilingualism and demonstrate some knowledge about dual language learning
 - 88% of parents of DLLs wanted their child to grow up to speak the home language *and English*
- **But there is room for improvement**
 - Fewer than 1 in 5 programs have a formal plan for serving DLLs
 - At least 1/3 of programs in California use English-only instruction



Instruction: Use of the Home Language

More home language use in the classroom



Better performance on preschool outcome measures, even on oral comprehension in *English*.





Instructional Strategies for Preschoolers

- **Promising practices**
 - Use of the home language
 - Books in the home language
 - Use of songs and basic phrases
- **Challenges**
 - Availability of materials
 - Reliable and valid assessments, especially in non-Spanish languages





Home Language Use and Instructional Practice with Infants/Toddlers

Greater English
use & teacher
English
proficiency

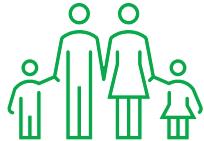


Greater development
overall and in English skills

More Spanish
books

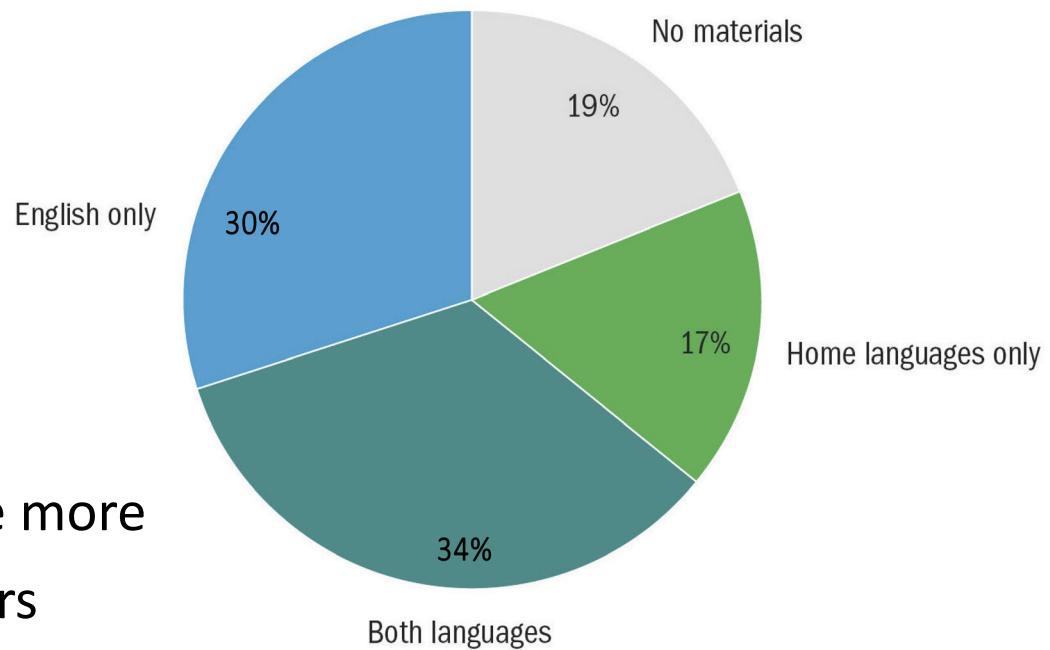


More complexity in
toddlers' Spanish language



Family Engagement

- Most families reported receiving from their program:
 - Communications in their preferred language
 - Positive messages about bilingualism
- 34% of families received home learning materials in English *and* their home language
 - English only materials were more likely to be shared at centers





Family Engagement

Providing positive messages about bilingualism & cultural diversity



Families value home language skills more as an aspect of school readiness

Providing home learning materials



Families engage in learning activities like reading and counting with child more frequently



Counties Build Family Engagement Through the Expansion Projects

- More than 11,000 families served; 50,000 books distributed
- Activities included workshops, Parent Cafés, family literacy activities, and more informal supports offered by early learning providers.
- Primary lessons learned:
 - Families appreciated *concrete* supports, like books and technology
 - Virtual training worked with families
 - Trusted messengers are critical



Professional Development

- Few early learning programs across the state require staff to receive DLL-focused PD
- Most teachers reported receiving at least *a little* DLL-related PD
- But fewer than 1 in 4 reported receiving *a lot* of PD on any given topic
- Similar patterns in centers and FCCHs





Professional Development

- Teachers who had received more DLL-related PD...
 - **had more favorable attitudes about bilingualism and greater confidence** in their ability to support DLLs
 - **were more likely to use evidence-based instructional practices for teaching DLLs**, including use of the home language for instruction and having books in the home language
 - **reported using a larger number of linguistically and culturally responsive family engagement strategies**
- *Overall, most teachers wanted more PD*



Counties Provide Professional Development Through Expansion Projects

- Most common training content: POLL strategies
- ~2,000 providers—serving ~12,000 children—participated
- In some counties, training included unit-bearing courses
- **What did providers say they learned?**
 - The importance of children growing up bilingual
 - The importance of *educating families* on the benefits of bilingualism
 - New strategies for strengthening home language and vocabulary
 - How to build relationships with families

What First 5 California Might Consider

- Elevate key messages throughout the state (e.g., benefits of bilingualism)
- Continue investments in professional learning for teachers/providers
 - Supports for teachers who do not speak students' home languages
 - Collaboration with community colleges
- Leverage QCC system as a vehicle for strengthening DLL supports
- Support the development and distribution of DLL resources and materials (e.g., books in the home language, assessments)
- Convene conversations to align practices across private early learning programs and TK

For more details, see our briefs on:

- County perspectives on the DLL context
- Statewide landscape for DLLs
- Statewide PD context
- Challenges of assessing DLLs
- Approaches to supporting DLLs
- DLL identification
- Assessing math for DLLs
- Family engagement

The collage consists of five vertical rectangular panels, each representing a different research brief from the First 5 California Dual Language Learner Pilot Study. The panels are arranged side-by-side, slightly overlapping.

- Panel 1: Quick Facts About Serving DLLs**
AUTHORS: Karen Manship, Heather Quirk
This brief presents key findings about dual language learners (DLLs), defined as children from birth to 5 years old who are learning English in addition to their home language. It highlights the diversity of DLLs in California, including their ages, family backgrounds, and education settings.
- Panel 2: Research Summary: Supporting DLL Families**
AUTHORS: Karen Manship, Heather Quirk
This brief summarizes research on how families can support their children's dual language learning. It emphasizes the importance of communication, involvement in school, and maintaining the child's home language at home.
- Panel 3: Research Brief: Dual Language Learners in Early Education**
AUTHORS: Karen Manship, Heather Quirk
This brief discusses the challenges of identifying DLLs in early education settings. It provides strategies for educators to recognize DLLs and support their learning.
- Panel 4: Research Brief: Dual Language Learners in Early Education**
AUTHORS: Karen Manship, Heather Quirk
This brief focuses on the assessment of DLLs in early education. It explores various assessment methods and provides recommendations for improving assessment practices.
- Panel 5: Math Skills Among Spanish-Speaking DLLs: Implications for Early Education**
MARCH 2022
AUTHORS: Lisa Hsin, Lisa White, Jennifer Anthony, Iliana Brodziak de los Reyes, Deborah Holtzman, Alejandra Martin, Karen Manship, and Heather Quirk
This brief examines the math skills of Spanish-speaking DLLs in early education. It finds that while DLLs often attend preschool programs, they may not receive the same level of math instruction as English-only speakers. The brief also discusses the importance of family engagement in supporting DLLs' math development.

Key Findings

- We found overwhelming endorsement of bilingualism by both families and programs. Most families wanted their children to become bilingual, and most received messages from their early learning programs on the importance of bilingualism.
- Programs were sensitive to families' language abilities and provided language-appropriate resources and on-site activities to help families foster their children's learning and development.
- Most families supported children's learning at home, and programs supported them in doing so by providing materials in English and the home language.
- Families whose programs contacted them more frequently tended to attend more program activities, assign more importance to kindergarten readiness skills, and engage their child in learning activities at home.



Next Steps

- Additional research briefs will be released in the next two months on:
 - Professional development experiences and outcomes for teachers
 - Instructional practices for preschoolers and infants/toddlers
 - DLL families' experiences during COVID
 - Final summary brief

<https://californiadllstudy.org/>



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Questions?

